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The JAS for Free: REVOLUTION!

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The JAS for Free: REVOLUTION!

February 17, 2009 in Uncategorized by [The China Beat](#) | [4 comments](#)

Last spring, we reported from the annual AAS meeting on President [Elizabeth Perry](#)'s inspiring address ("Reclaiming the Chinese Revolution"). For a short period of time, the address is available for [free PDF download](#) and we strongly encourage you to grab a copy while you can. [Link will take you to the issue and from there you can select the format in which you wish to view Perry's piece.] The address begins:

REVOLUTIONS ARE UNPOPULAR THESE days, among Western politicians and scholars alike. We put our faith in liberal institutions such as markets and courts of law, looking to "democratic transitions" rather than to social revolutions as the path toward political progress. The view of revolution as a nasty and needless mistake was evident twenty years ago when celebrations surrounding the bicentennial of the French Revolution evoked debate and discomfort both inside and outside France. Then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, after leaving Paris on Bastille Day 1989, tapped into the prevailing sentiment when she presented President François Mitterrand with a handsome edition of Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, and smugly instructed the French president to read Dickens to learn why the French Revolution had been completely unnecessary...

Indeed, I imagine it is fair to say that many members of our association were initially drawn to the Asian field because we once held a favorable view of the Chinese revolution. Forty years ago, in the spring of 1968, the Association for Asian Studies convened its annual meeting in Philadelphia. That occasion was marked by a subgathering of Asianists who opposed the war in Vietnam, out of which was born the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS). The many budding young Asianists who soon joined the CCAS, myself included, were generally united in the conviction that the war in Vietnam represented an epochal clash between a dynamic Asian revolutionary upsurge, stirred by the example of Mao's China, on the one hand, and a destructive American imperialism, bolstered by the work of some prominent members of the Asian studies establishment, on the other.

But that was then...

The availability of the address is part of an effort on the part of the AAS's journal, the *Journal of Asian Studies*, to increase the association's reach. For another free article (again, available for limited time), see "[State, Sovereignty, and the People: A Comparison of the 'Rule of Law' in China and India](#)" by Jonathan K. Ocko and David Gilmartin (Feb. 2009).

Tags: [AAS](#), [Elizabeth Perry](#)